No. 24.

THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM.

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Each member can send questions, answers to questions, opinions, and notes upon Theosophical subjects. When necessary, the various communications will be condensed by the editor. Members will be careful to write on only one side of the paper and to use black ink.

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June, 1891.

QUESTION CXVII.

What may be said as to the reïncarnation of an Adept?

A. K.—It is, of course, impossible to give even an approximate account of the method of incarnation of an adept. Only those who have themselves passed through the process consciously can do so with any accuracy. Therefore it does not seem very profitable to indulge in speculation on the subject,—speculation which in such a matter as this must always go very wide of the truth. Still, the question having been asked, it may be useful to put forward a few thoughts on the matter, it being always remembered that they do not attempt to settle the question through either knowledge or authority.

When reïncarnation takes place in the ordinary way, we have been told that the scattered Skandhas of the last personality are gathered together, and under their action the new Linga Sarira or Astral Form is moulded, this in turn guiding the formation of the physical embryo. In all such cases, then, a new astral form is evolved with each birth, because the Skandhas or attributes of the entity are concerned more nearly with

the mortal personality instead of with the immortal individuality. Therefore, when the Linga Sarira has become part of the immortal individual through being so purified as to have no mortal, disintegrating force within it, such a Linga Sarira will cohere and last from incarnation to incarnation as the vehicle of the entity which evolved it. Its conscious formation and use would imply that the entity was an adept. As we are told that the physical body is moulded upon the Astral Form or Linga Sarira, the continuity of the Astral Form ensures for the adept immediate re-birth for the purpose of continuing his work. Of course in this case the process of training the new body would have to be undergone, but such a process would be completed in these cases at an earlier period than the ordinary process of education. It is only natural to suppose that the memory is coëqual with the continuance of the astral body, and thus one great difficulty —the process of education and recovery of the memory—is spared to an adept in an incarnation which takes place by the method prevailing at present.

But there is another condition conceivable to the mind. We know that nothing is wasted in nature, not even time, and that use is made of all available material. It would thus be a natural conception that in the case of children or young adults whose Karma has been exhausted at an early period and who therefore fade out of incarnation while the energies of the physical body are almost entirely unimpaired, it would be possible for an adept who had to reïncarnate to revivify the body so deserted by linking to it his own astral form and energies. The seemingly dead person would recover as if from a trance, and life would go on as before. Still, to a close observer there would probably be a great change of character, and capabilities would be evidenced proportionate to the change between the conscious adept with all his memory behind him and the more or less unconscious entity previously inhabiting the body. In such a case the adept would only have to train the physical body to be his instrument, although in some cases this operation might be a matter of some difficulty. The question naturally arises, Why not select a better one? Such cases as above-mentioned are not very common, and advantage would have to

be taken of them when they occur. Further than this, only the highest adepts are entirely free from Karma, and such difficulties producing suffering and trouble to the individual would properly fall under the operation of Karma.

Of course I do not mean to say that these methods are correctly represented or that the incarnation of adepts occurs in such a way. Practically all that it means is that for an adept there is formed a Linga Sarira or Astral Form which continues perfect with all its attributes over great periods of time. This Linga Sarira assumes physical manifestation either by birth in the usual manner, which would naturally seem a great waste of time, or by borrowing a body whose owner has no further use for it in the particular incarnation.

Some ideas on the subject may also be gathered from *Isis Unveiled.*

QUESTION CXVIII.

Is the Forum entirely certain that logic and reason are the surest paths to Truth, that is, to the highest truths?

A Friend F. T. S.—I ask this because, if such be the case, we can never accept one particle of the teachings of any one whose soul is on a higher plane of development than ours. *In logic only equals can meet.* Intuitions are neither subject to nor proveable by logic.

I cannot *prove*, it may be, that the music of Wagner is deeply beautiful, although it may fill my soul with awe and delight, if to you it is but meaningless noise. I cannot demonstrate by any system of logic that an immeasurable gulf separates the "Venus of Milo" from Powers's "Greek Slave," to one who regards both as "stone gals." I cannot tell one whose *soul* does not see it that Rembrandt's "Gilder" is so far above a portrait, say by Mr. Chase, that a comparison between the two is grotesque. I cannot convince the fellow who will not look up from his hand at poker to view the tender glories of a misty dawn that he is missing anything, for he is not. We live in different worlds, and my words, if I am so silly as to utter any, sound to his ears as the mere twaddle of affectation.

Have a care lest in denying truth to anything that your little tape-line of reason and logic cannot measure, you are not eschewing the real, the highest, and the grandest TRUTHS.

Ans.—The "Friend" has his feet upon the sure path, for he is himself beginning to reason, and the imperfection of an early attempt is no ground whatever for discouragement. As he advances on that path he will learn how sound reason teaches that every subject cognizable by man is to be dealt with by the faculty appropriate to it, just as the work of a scientist or an artificer is carried on by the instruments belonging thereto, not by those for a different purpose. The astronomer does not use a retort but a telescope; the anatomist handles a scalpel, not an axe; the engraver selects a graving-tool, not a paint-brush. So in the region of art and the higher emotions. Music is apprehended by the musical sense, not by a syllogism; no acuteness of physical sight or hearing will disclose to a Red Indian the meaning of a Titian or a Verdi; the heroism of a man who sacrifices himself rather than his duty is not perceived by the keenest dialectics. So, too, with morals. The moral sense detects distinctions, not so the arithmetical faculty; and, beyond that, the spiritual principle feels and responds to the things of the spirit.

These are certainly not the "grandest Truths",—they are hardly more than truisms, truisms disclosed in the incipient use of the little tape-line. The next stage for the "Friend" is to understand how and when the contents of one sphere become subject to the operations of another sphere. It is when they are translated over from one to the other. If an expounder of spiritual philosophy, for instance, writes in terms and style avowedly intended only for the intuitive, he has the same right to do so as has the advanced mathematician to publish a work on the Integral Calculus unintelligible to the public. This was the case with *Light on the Path* and *The Voice of the Silence*. But if, deserting the plane of intuitions, he propounds propositions upon the plane of intellect, sustaining them by reason and analogy, he invites a test by those very tools. "Doctrine" *(doceo)* means "teaching", and you cannot ask intellectual

assent to doctrine and at the same time deny to the intellect its right to pass upon it. You cannot, in other words, invoke and repudiate an appeal in the same breath. In legal phrase, you mustn't "discredit your own witness".

Two other facts, a trifle more recondite, for the "Friend". In the world of ideas it is rarely that fields are sharply separated. They blend into, overpass, commingle not a little. The finest spiritual conceptions have an element of rationality, and the creations of the poet and the orator are not purely intellectual. Moreover, reason, as it refines itself, rises to more exalted plateaux, enlarging its range and enriching its quality. The other is, logic is avowedly a *formal* science. As it does not consider (except collaterally, as in the *fallacia accidentis*) contents but process, the FORUM never did, and never will, regard it an all-inclusive method. Possibly the "Friend" may have been influenced less by acquaintance with it than by popular suspicion of it. But however this may be, logic has its uses, and its employment in Theosophic literature helps to clear out inconsequent reasoning and other evils which offend the intelligent and repel the thoughtful. There is very little danger that it will become too common, none that it will eschew the real, the highest, the grandest Truths. Both sound reason and sound logic recognize the existence of other and loftier spheres than their own, and are prompt to repudiate the notion that they comprehend all range of the inner man.

QUESTION CXIX.

Is the utter vileness and sexual depravity into which a large portion of mankind has fallen part of the normal process of evolution of humanity, or is it abnormal? Has something "gone wrong", making it possible that the present humanity may prove a failure and be lost?

Ans.—This seems like an exaggerated statement of the case. It may be conceded that there is more sensuality among mankind than either reasonable enjoyment or the continuance of the race demands, and it is no doubt true that less of it would conduce to higher and more enduring satisfactions. But there

may well be question whether "utter vileness" is so general, and whether so much as exists imperils humanity. If, without prepossessions or doctrinal bias, we examine coolly the matter, the opposite conclusion has probability.

In the first place, it is rather remarkable that the most intense of all passions should be kept within any bounds at all. Given an instinct so rampant and so almost universal, one would expect it to over-ride all other instincts and make the earth a scene of unbridled lust. Yet, in fact, all nations set limits to it in their customs or laws, even the most barbarous recognizing domestic rights and protecting them. Good taste and good feeling, conscience, affection for an individual, the pressure of varied occupations and claims, the competition of other forms of enjoyment or ambition, all have a very great modifying influence, and the actual state of the world exhibits fewer excesses than one would have antecedently supposed probable.

In the second place, Nature has arranged a corrective consequence which works automatically. Where sensuality receives national sanction and provision, the national virility, strength, enterprise, cohesive power decline. Turkey is a case in point. The Mormons might seem to prove the reverse, but it is to be noted that they have been recruited from immigration, that they have been penetrated by outside influences, and that their distinctive career has been very short. The rule is that a people decays when sensuality is made the organic policy.

In the third place, civilization is mounting and spreading nearly everywhere, and civilization means the exaltation of the higher over the lower faculties. It does not always or directly foster morals, as we can see in the internal state of civilized nations, in their attitude to each other, and in their influence on subject peoples; but its essential principle is the use of intelligence, and intelligence, as it grows, dwarfs the purely physical appetites. This is a common-place in physiology and psychology. Now as intellectual expansion goes on, passional impulses proportionally abating, selfishness recedes from the sphere of lust and exhibits itself in less carnal forms. It is reasonable to suppose that still further expansion will prepare for the entrance of truer conceptions of life and duty, that Karma and Reïncarnation

will become beliefs and then motives, and that a correct moral system will result. The process of moral evolution seems to be from the physical through the intellectual plane, and so secular civilization is really clearing the way for dominance of the higher principles.

If such sensuality as exists is less than might be expected; if Nature checks excesses by national sterility and individual impotence; if the course of mental evolution includes correlative declension of physical passion; and if moral evolution follows gradually upon mental; there is no reason for supposing that present humanity is a failure of Nature,—rather the reverse. We may justifiably look forward to an increase of healthy thought, to a less artificial and more rationally-based system of moral injunction, to a greater measure of control over undue passions, to a concomitant perception of supersensual truth, and to a secure advance of humanity on the upward arc. This is a more benign and generous anticipation, and apparently more in consonance with reason and fact.

QUESTION CXX.

How is accounted for the fact that, whatever our condition in this life of poverty, pain, and suffering, we would not willingly exchange our personality with any other, even the most favored? The apple-woman at the corner would not change with Queen Victoria. Each would like to exchange conditions and surroundings with one more favored, but not the personality.

Ans.—We know ourselves in measure, and understand about what are the internal satisfactions and drawbacks in our characters, but we cannot know these in another, and such a change would be a leap in the dark which anyone would hesitate to make. Then, again, almost every person has an instinctive feeling that he is not to die soon, and he does not wish to; he might be imperilling his chance of longer life if he exchanged his lot *in toto* with someone else. But deeper than either reason is self-consciousness. Existence, thought, perception, all the sentiments and cognitions which make up a being, are so interwoven with the "I" that we can only conceive of a separate

being by inference. To sacrifice all of existence we know would seem to obliterate it forever, for the assumption of a different personality through an exchange would be to sever utterly the old, and this would be a form of deliberate death. Moreover, every man has certain very positive convictions and tastes which are very dear to him and which constitute an inherent part of his present nature; and probably most men are conscious of some peculiarities which differentiate them from, and even make them superior to, others. Whether these really exist or not is immaterial: they are *supposed* to exist, and the effect is to create an interior satisfaction from which no one would be willing to part. While, then, a man might be very glad to gain a station or a purse or a name or a connection which he covets, he would not do it if he had to give up the very nature which felt the coveting and which would be lost to him in the moment of receiving the thing coveted, for where then would be the gratification? The new circumstances might be a boon to the old nature, but they would have perforce to be connected with the new nature, not the old; and even that new nature would be old in relation to those circumstances. Hence the exchanger would have no more chance of happiness than the original possessor: he would, in fact, *be* the original possessor. It is not certain that Queen Victoria is any happier than the apple-woman; and it is probable that are there thousands of women who have less to disturb and more to content them than she. However this may be, their individuality is dearer to them than anything else, and they would not give it up for a crown any more than they would give up life for the most gorgeous mausoleum ever built.

QUESTION CXXI.

Are there well-authenticated cases on record of clairvoyance in persons born blind, where correct descriptsons of things have been given as they appear to the organ of sight?

W. Q. J.—I have heard of one or two such cases, but as now they cannot be produced they are not of present value. But it is well known that blind people have ideas as to objects

and localities which they have never perceived as those do who have perfect sight. In these cases they must have concepts, probably the same as those arising in others from good sight. This, however, is not clairvoyance. It is, however, certain that cases such as the question calls for must be very rare, inasmuch as blind people would not be usually credited with clairvoyance, but would, in telling of places, naturally be thought to describe scenes of the imagination. Furthermore, it is extremely doubtful if a clairvoyant blind from birth could have possession of terms to use in describing objects so as to be understood by others not blind.

QUESTION CXXII.

Take a person born in circumstances denying him an advanced education, and suddenly thrown on his own efforts for a living, without natural business tact, and with none developed by education. Does Karma hold him responsible and will he be punished for the results of his ignorance in not turning things to the best account and making a success of his work?

Ans.—There is a misconception here respecting the nature of Karma, *i.e.*, in considering it as an administrator purely of morals, dealing out punishments and rewards as either class is deserved. But Karma is far more than this; it is the universal law of cause and effect, operating in every field and on every plane. The essence of Karma is that *the effect shall follow upon the cause*, and this is just as true in the physical as in the spiritual, in the intellectual as in the moral, world.

In the case supposed, there could be no blame to the person if he did his best with such resources as he possessed. Ability is the limit of obligation, and a man can no more be required to do what he has no power to do than a child can be required to do the work of a giant. Any other doctrine would be fatal to justice and reason. Karma, therefore, will not hold him responsible and punish him for what was in no way his fault. But, on the other hand, neither will it ensure to him a greater success than is the natural consequence of such efforts as he is able to make. If he has small capacity, or if he is bungling or untact-

ful, he cannot rationally expect the result which could come only from his being talented and skilful. This would be to demand an effect without a cause,—a thing Karma never grants and should not be asked to. It is not a sin for a man to be unavoidably ignorant or untrained, and neither moral stigma nor moral penalty attaches to such a state; but the *physical* consequences of imperfect action must follow upon that action, and he has no right to expect different ones. So then, if he makes mistakes, he must undergo the effects, not as punishments but as inevitable mechanical results void of moral quality, just as an ignorant purchaser of stocks will lose on a falling market. He may think this hard, and so it would be if intended as a rebuke where no blame lay, but considered as the necessary consequence of forces set in motion and necessarily working out to their end, there is no reason for questioning justice or impugning the excellence of Law. If we make a misstep on the ice, we fall and hurt ourselves; if we make a misstep in business policy, we lose money or the chance to make it; each effect is Karmic, but it is Karma on the plane of matter or of mind, not Karma on the plane of morals.

QUESTION CXXIII.

Is it necessary for every Monad during its periods of evolution, in order to gain experience and knowledge, to pass through all the conditions we call sin, such as stealing, killing, lying, etc. ? Or is it through education that some realize these things to be wrong ?

Ans.—We need to discriminate between "necessary in point of law" and "necessary in point of fact". There cannot be a law compelling every monad to commit sin, for then there would be no veritable Head of good, no moral choice, and no moral discipline. Yet it may be a fact that no monad actually returns to its original source without having gone around the descending arc. As *Light on the Path* puts it, "Before you can attain knowledge, you must have passed through all places, foul and clean alike". It may be that a soul cannot understand evil, just as it cannot understand suffering, without having experienced it; that the realization of purity requires the realization of its

opposite; that discernment between right and wrong comes only after familiarity with both; that such qualities as fortitude, resolution, aspiration, faith, and perseverance cannot be evolved except as pain—implying prior transgression—evokes them; that sympathy with the erring presupposes acquaintance with their consciousness; that the perfect character is one which has undergone every form of discipline. These and other considerations may show that an individuality which had never sinned would not be *in fact* perfect, for its consciousness would be but partial. But the consequence by no means follows, either that it was forced into sinning or that it would be at liberty to keep on sinning in order to enlarge its experience.

That some individuals seem to have moral distinctions fully impressed upon them by fortunate education is true, though one cannot say how far they have really progressed in incarnations prior to the current. It is hardly possible, however, that such truths should be *realized* through mere instruction, or without a very thorough preparatory discipline in times past. Of the race considered as a whole, it is probably the fact that the utilitarian theory of morals accounts for the genesis of moral distinctions, and the intuitive theory for their affirmation. Progress comes through the pressure from both factors. Of an individual, we are probably right in supposing that present excellence means a long course of past emergence from lower levels as experience showed them unremunerative and spirituality made them distasteful, and an existing incarnation wherein the lessons of its predecessors ripened into fruitage.

QUESTION CXXIV.

"*The enjoyments which proceed from the operations of the senses are wombs of future pain.*" (*Bhagavad-Gîtâ, Path for Aug., 1890, Page 1*). *How is one to understand this?*

Ans.—As meaning that sensual pleasures are apt to be followed by suffering. But observe: it is not said that they are the *parent* of future pain, but only the *womb;* that is, though not necessarily procreative of pain, they furnish conditions, facilities, for its procreation. Enjoyment is not wrong, nor is enjoyment

from the senses wrong. The Great Father is not a Puritan; He is not most content when His children are in trouble, nor did He provide this wonderfully constituted body of ours with a view only to its aches and hurts. But it is well also to remember some other facts no less true.

Physical pleasures, being upon the plane of direct sensation, are more tangible, and therefore more immediately attractive, than pleasures on the higher planes of mind or spirit. Hence they are more promptly sought, become habitual more quickly, and readily displace a taste for the remote and finer. But as the body, unlike the inner being, is not susceptible of limitless development, gradually loses its powers, and is finally dropped at death, these consequences follow:—

Sensual enjoyments never can go beyond a certain point.

They are apt to pall upon the taste after long indulgence.

They necessarily lose flavor, and even possibility, with advancing age.

They are prone to induce excess, hence exhaustion and disease.

A nature devoted solely to them has nothing in reserve when they vanish.

Hence, then, they are "the wombs of future pain". But this is not all. Soul-culture being the real purpose of incarnation and undue bodily culture diverting energy and retarding it, the lost ground has to be made up under conditions of greater difficulty. A sensualist enormously increases the labor, trouble, set-backs, disappointments, sorrows he must undergo before he rids himself of false ideals and gets upon the true path. Nothing is harder to reverse than habit, and the habit of an incarnation moulds the incarnation following. From its womb come the experiences therein. A man, therefore, being the parent of his own future, ensures pain to it if he makes it of elements certain to produce pain.

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